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OVER THE HILLS By
JOHN PALMER.

OVER THE HILLS



OVER THE HILLS

(PRODUCED IN 1912)

<i>Robert Wilde</i>	-	EDMUND GWENN.
<i>Helen Wilde</i>	-	HILDA TREVELYAN.
<i>Martin Durrant</i>	-	{ C. M. HALLARD. THOMAS N. WEGUELIN.
<i>Maidservant</i>	-	MINNIE TERRY.

OVER THE HILLS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT. BY
JOHN PALMER

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CHARACTERS

ROBERT WILDE.

HELEN (*his wife*).

MARTIN DURRANT.

A MAIDSERVANT.

Scene—Dining-room of Mr. Robert Wilde's desirable residence in Finchley.

The curtain descends for a moment of the play to mark the lapse of several hours.



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OVER THE HILLS

It is a wild night outside, but the dining-room is entirelyle weatherproof. There is a blazing fire, and MRS. WILDE stitches comfortably beside it. Her work-basket is within reach on a small oak table. On the other side of this table is the most comfortable chair in the room; but MR. WILDE is not sitting within it. He is obviously restless. At one moment he stands at the back of the stage, looking out into the night round the edge of the Venetian blind. Then with a fierce light in his eyes he paces forward down the length of the room and back to the window. When he faces the audience, he passes the fire and his wife and the comfortable chairs on his right.

Except for MR. WILDE, it is a picture of restfulness. The best house coal from the local agent is burning in the grate. The carpets are genuine Persian, and the furniture is old oak. The folding table (real Jacobean) is pushed back to the wall away from the fire, leaving a noble space in the centre of the room. Along this wall is an oak dresser, obviously a genuine antique.

It is a room which, we are sure, would be the pride of Mr. and Mrs. WILDE if they were a really home-loving couple. Of MRS. WILDE there can be no doubt. She definitely has settled down—a placid, sensible, humorous woman of about thirty-five. Mr. WILDE is forty; but he has about him a wild, romantic air of the man who has not yet put away childish things. But he is getting stout, and we can only with difficulty imagine him outside the house, instead of being in, on a night like this.

MRS. WILDE watches him pacing the carpet with the air of one who is used to this kind of thing. Obviously his restlessness, so far as she is concerned, is of no importance. SHE is very patient, but at last it begins rather to get on her nerves, and she thinks she ought to say something.

HELEN. You're uncommonly restless to-night, dear.

ROBERT (*coming dramatically from the window*). Restless! (*With emotion*) Listen to the wind!

HELEN (*matter-of-fact*). It does make itself heard.

ROBERT (*uplifted*). It sings in the branches of the old elm like a pæan.

HELEN. A what?

ROBERT (*annoyed at being pulled up*). A pæan.

HELEN. What is a pæan?

ROBERT. A pæan, my dear, is a song of triumph. From the Greek.

(HE resumes his march.)

HELEN (*after a pause*). I do wish you'd settle down to something, Robert. You give me the fidgets.

ROBERT (*wildly addressing the ceiling*). The Fidgets! I give her the fidgets!

(HE stands again at the window and looks out.)

HELEN (*after a further pause*). Is it still raining, Robert?

ROBERT (*with ecstasy*). Raining? The wind is driving from over the hills like a great sail. The clouds are scudding across the moon; and, as the light comes and goes, I get glimpses of drenched fields, and trees flinging spray from their branches. The leaves come scattering down. I hear the wind shouting to the old elm, and the old elm, flinging off its weight of years, shouts back to the wind.

(HELEN has obviously heard this kind of thing very frequently. She is profoundly unimpressed.)

HELEN (*matter-of-fact*). I suppose you know about the hen-house?

ROBERT (*disgusted*). The hen-house?

HELEN. The old elm, flinging off its weight of years, has made a hole in the hen-house. I always told you that that tree would have to be lopped. It

isn't safe. Suppose, when the branch fell, Maggie had been feeding the hens. We are not insured against workmen's compensation. Luckily, no one was killed except the new Orpington, who was sitting at the time.

ROBERT. And because a sitting hen has been killed you would lop that grand old tree. Have you no sense of beauty?

HELEN. As you please, my dear; I don't care so very much about the poultry. But you will insist on having your eggs absolutely new-laid. (*Pause.*) We've had a dreadful day. Maggie had to chase those wretched birds for nearly half an hour in the pouring rain. They were out all over the place. ROBERT (*significantly*). Ah, even the hens!

(HELEN surveys him, cheerfully resigned to another outburst.)

They, too, are set free, and may seek the waste places.

HELEN. Now, my dear, you are talking nonsense. The hens were frightened. Very naturally.

ROBERT. I'm afraid, Helen, you have a literal mind.

HELEN. No one could be poetical about hens. Not even the Poet Laureate.

ROBERT (*with dignity*). We will not argue about it.

(HE again marches to and fro for a while, then suddenly stops.)

ROBERT (*with exasperation*). How you can sit there like that, Helen, beats me altogether!

HELEN (*placidly*). It is very comfortable.

ROBERT (*sardonically*). Exactly. Very comfortable. And that is a very nice piece of old oak (*indicating the dresser*). And you are sitting on a stuffed chair. And the carpet is from Persia. (*He snorts.*)

HELEN. Won't you come and sit by the fire? It would be nice if you would read me something.

ROBERT (*in appalling tones*). Sit by the fire! With the wind calling! Is it possible?

(HELEN puts down her sewing, rises, and adjusts a cushion on the chair by the fire; she pats it invitingly.)

HELEN. For my sake, Robert.

(ROBERT, who likes to be comfortable, makes a show of resistance, but, yielding, at last permits himself to sink luxuriously down. HELEN again stitches by the fire.)

ROBERT (*mournfully*). The rooted elm may play with the wind and rain; but the man who is a householder shall stop his ears like Ulysses when the Sirens sang.

(HE stretches lazily for a book of poems on the table, beside the work-basket. It is Henley's "Hawthorn and Lavender." He peacefully turns the leaves, and begins dreamily to read some verses.)

ROBERT.

Since those we love and those we hate,
With all things mean and all things great,
Pass in a desperate disarray
Over the hills and far away,

It must be, dear, that late or soon,
Out of the ken of the watching moon,
We shall abscond with yesterday
Over the hills and far away.

ROBERT (*stretching his legs yet more comfortably to the fire*). Those verses fill me with a restless longing to take once again the mystic road, the road of all who are born to wander. (*Rearranging the cushion comfortably behind his head.*) The comfort of this room comes to be a torture of the soul. The wind calls, and the four walls drop away; the light is quenched; the fire dies. (*He stretches his hand comfortably to the blaze.*) The long road stretches before, and the wind meets me from over the hills. Once again I feel the sting of rain. Then it is, in the breath of the storm, one pities the slow, warm people stretched lazily before the hearth, droning away the time.

HELEN (*leaning over the table*). Let me take your book, dear. That's right. Now you are quite comfortable.

ROBERT (*who is now thoroughly happy*). How hateful it is to lie easefully and inert, a figure at which gods may point the finger! Is life to be no more than comfort?

HELEN. You are quite right about this room, Robert. It's the only really comfortable room in the house when the wind is in the north-west.

ROBERT (*starting up*). I suppose you think that's clever.

HELEN (*innocently*). Now what have I said?

ROBERT. Just as I am pointing out to you that comfort does not matter, that it is abominable, you suggest that I am sitting in the dining-room because it is the most comfortable room in the house.

HELEN (*mildly*). You suggested we should sit here.

ROBERT (*angrily lifting himself out of the chair*). Not for myself. I sometimes think of you.

HELEN. Very sweet of you, Robert! (*She rises and rearranges the cushion for him.*)

ROBERT (*irritably seizing the cushion from her*). Not there! That's where I like to have it.

(HELEN returns to her work.)

ROBERT (*dreamily*). Those lines of Henley bring back to me the days when I was a wanderer with Martin. It was his favourite poem.

HELEN. Martin Durrant?

ROBERT. Yes, Martin Durrant. There, if you like, was a man.

HELEN. A very restless and unsatisfactory creature, from all accounts.

ROBERT. Martin was a born vagabond. Many's the trail we have followed over land and sea.

(HE springs up, stirred by his reminiscences, and looks out of the window.)

(Turning into the room) These were the nights we loved best. A night like this we would take a bee-line over the country. How wet we would get! How gloriously wet!

HELEN. Very enjoyable, no doubt. So is a mustard bath and Benger's food.

ROBERT (*with a shout of scorn*). Oh! How can you understand? Have you ever defied the wind in his fury? Have you ever mocked the rain?

HELEN. I have not.

ROBERT. To think that I am standing here upon a carpet from Persia, sheltered by the four walls of a room, when the wind is calling! (*Settling himself again by the fire.*) If Martin be within the limits of this storm, he is out with the wind to-night, following the old, old trail. Over the hills.

(*He closes his eyes luxuriously. There is a knock at the front door.*)

HELEN. Robert, that was a knock. Who can it be at this time of night?

ROBERT. Are you sure it was a knock?

HELEN. Better go and see who it is. Maggie may not have heard.

ROBERT (*horrified*). Go to the door on a night like this!

(*Another knock.*)

HELEN. Possibly it's the wind calling. I'm not at home.

MAGGIE announces Mr. DURRANT. THEY wait for a moment; then the door opens and MARTIN DURRANT appears, shown in by MAGGIE. HE stands on the threshold, a romantic figure which succeeds in being all that Mr. WILDE is now unable to be.

He has removed his coat ; but his boots are wet, and his hair hangs limp on his forehead. He looks at ROBERT in the chair, and from him to HELEN. MAGGIE takes his coat and hat and goes out.)

ROBERT (*springing up*). Martin !

MARTIN. Well, Robert ?

ROBERT (*awkwardly*). Helen.—er . . . this is Martin Durrant. Er . . . my wife.

MARTIN (*bowing to Helen, obviously a little stunned*). How do you do ? (*Looking at ROBERT*) I . . . I did not know. Congratulations !

HELEN (*very self-possessed, not leaving her sewing*). We were just talking of you, Mr. Durrant. You are the man who used to be so fond of getting wet.

MARTIN. I am still fond of it. I have walked all the way from Charing Cross, simply to enjoy the rain. I arrived this morning from Tripoli.

HELEN (*pulling in another chair*). Er . . . won't you sit down ?

(THEY sit. *An awkward pause.*)

ROBERT. Would you like some whisky—something hot ?

MARTIN. No, thank you.

(*Another awkward pause.*)

HELEN (*suddenly rising*). It's time for me to go.

MARTIN (*rising*). Please don't let me drive you away.

HELEN. Nonsense ! You two are old friends. You didn't expect to see me here, and you had no

time to pretend you were delighted. The situation is extremely awkward.

MARTIN. I hope you will come back, Mrs. Wilde.

HELEN (*briefly*). Yes. Robert will be wanting his Bengers's food.

[*Exit HELEN. SHE closes the door.*]

MARTIN. Bengers's food? Robert, this is serious. To find you married is not so bad. It might happen to anybody. But what is Bengers's food?

ROBERT (*huffily*). I take it to please my wife.

MARTIN. Is it as bad as that? When did it happen?

ROBERT. As soon as I got back from that Pacific trip.

MARTIN. About seven years ago. Quite settled down.

ROBERT (*changing the subject*). What have you been doing?

MARTIN. What am I always doing? I've been round the world another three times or so.

(*He springs up and critically surveys the room.*)

ROBERT. How did you find me out?

MARTIN. I called immediately at the club. Peters told me the address. He was quite sad about it. "Finchley, sir," he said; "he has taken a desirable residence." "But Finchley," I objected, "is a suburb." "Yes, sir," said Peters; "I'm afraid Mr. Wilde is not the man he was." You and Peters always agreed about suburbs—places to settle down in.

ROBERT (*savagely*). Peters might have told you I was married.

MARTIN. Peters never did like to inflict pain.

(MARTIN *has been wandering round the room during these remarks, with the eyes of a connoisseur.*)

MARTIN. You're pretty snug in here.

ROBERT (*flattered and delighted*). It is a comfortable room, don't you think?

MARTIN (*before the dresser*). That's a nice piece of old oak.

ROBERT (*leaping up to show off his possessions*). Isn't it? Look at the legs. Stuart, running into Queen Anne. It is a collector's piece. Shows the transition.

MARTIN. A comfortable room, a comfortable wife, comfortable old oak. How *did* it happen?

ROBERT (*testily*). It's very well to scoff. But there *is* something in having a place of your own.

MARTIN. A place of your own! Really, Robert, you forget the first principles of our system. This room at the present moment is as much mine as yours. I can feel the fire. I can enjoy all you have. And in a few moments I can leave it. Then the wind and the rain is mine. All I touch belongs as much to me as to the people who have bought it, and insured it against fire and burglary. More. For me it is pure enjoyment. For them it is money spent, anxiety, and imprisonment.

ROBERT (*irritably*). I know all about that. Any-

one, to hear you talk, would think I was a comfortably married man.

MARTIN (*looking round*). It certainly looks like it.

ROBERT (*striding to the window and indicating the elements with a magnificent gesture*). Do you imagine I am deaf to all that? Do you imagine I *prefer* to be as I am?

MARTIN (*grinning*). Over the hills—eh?

ROBERT. If only you knew how restless I have been to-night!

MARTIN (*looking fixedly at ROBERT's armchair*). I noticed you quite carefully when I came in. Robert, you have changed! I am sure that at the present moment you are thinking more about my dirty boots on the carpet than anything else.

(ROBERT *looks hastily away from MARTIN's boots, and walks solemnly towards him.*)

ROBERT (*putting his hand on MARTIN's shoulder*). If only you *knew*! I have suffered. (*Overcoming his emotion*) However, tell me about yourself.

(THEY *prepare to settle down.*)

ROBERT (*as MARTIN is about to sit on ROBERT's chair*). No, not there. This one is more comfortable.

(HE *pulls forward HELEN's chair.*)

MARTIN (*settling down luxuriously*). Thanks.

ROBERT (*drawing cigars from his pocket*). Have a cigarette?

MARTIN. Thanks, I prefer a pipe.

(THEY *both make themselves comfortable.*)

ROBERT. Now, where have you been exactly?

MARTIN. Well (*puff*), there's not much to tell (*puff*). I've been mostly (*puff*) on the old tracks, chiefly in the East. (*He breaks off, to look fondly at his steaming boots.*) You know, Robert, the best of being a vagabond is that you may always be conscientiously comfortable whenever you have the chance. The golden rule is, to take everything as it comes. I've another ten miles to-night. Meantime, this is very agreeable. (*Sighs contentedly.*)

ROBERT. Yes, but——

MARTIN. How do you think I came up to town this morning?

ROBERT. How?

MARTIN. I came in the *Golliwog*. I have bought her. Couldn't resist it. I have come in her from Tripoli.

ROBERT (*with excitement*). Then she's in London?

MARTIN. She is. The times we have had in that smelly old boat! You remember the smell (*sniffs delightedly*). Lascars, oil, tar, and bilge. That smell always takes me back to the night when we found that island of ours in the Pacific. I was there the other day. The hut is still standing. But the tinned stuff was all bad.

ROBERT. When did you buy the *Golliwog*?

MARTIN. A month ago. Came across her on the coast of Africa. Bought her and kept on the old dirty crew. Came straight up to tell you. Thought perhaps you'd like to start off with me to-morrow. But your wanderings are over, Robert, my boy.

ROBERT (*rising excitedly*). Where are you going?

MARTIN. Haven't an idea. I thought of just sailing out, turning round three times with my eyes shut, and going off in a straight line.

ROBERT. Are you stocked?

MARTIN. The Lascars are seeing to that now. I'm going on to the cottage at Elstree to-night to pick up one or two books. I'm off to-morrow on the fall of the tide.

ROBERT (*hoarsely*). Don't, Martin. I can't bear it.

MARTIN. Why not come?

ROBERT. How can I come?

MARTIN. Come for a short spin—a holiday.

ROBERT (*more hoarsely*). I daren't.

MARTIN. Is your wife so terrible?

ROBERT. It isn't that. I'm afraid of myself. (*Dreamily*) Once I set my face to the sea, I could never come back. It would be over the hills—never to return.

MARTIN (*cheerfully*). I'll guarantee to get you back.

ROBERT (*dismally*). What would be the use of it? Could I have the old sense of freedom? It would be merely travelling. There is nothing in that. It is the feeling of perfect freedom which is so glorious—each day a law to itself. That feeling can never come to me again.

Enter Helen.

ROBERT. Besides, how can I leave my wife? Even for a day. It would break her heart.

HELEN (*coming forward*). Robert is a born traveler. He has the gift of exaggeration.

ROBERT (*tragically*). Helen! You have heard everything.

HELEN. Everything, Robert.

ROBERT (*smitten with remorse*). How can you forgive me?

HELEN (*briefly*). The point is you would like a holiday. Have one.

(MARTIN gives up his chair to HELEN.)

MARTIN (*twinkling with mischief; he takes HELEN's view of ROBERT as a wanderer*). I was just suggesting, Mrs. Wilde, that Robert should sail with me to-morrow morning. A short holiday would do him good.

HELEN (*stitching again*). I agree. Robert is out of sorts.

MARTIN (*settling by the fire*). Worse. He's getting stout.

HELEN. When would you like Robert to be ready?

MARTIN. I am going over to my cottage at Elstree to-night, and sailing on the morning tide. Robert can start with me now, or join me at Tilbury.

HELEN (*matter-of-fact*). Which is it to be, Robert?

ROBERT (*horrorstruck*). Helen!

HELEN. Well, dear ?

ROBERT (*wildly*). You do not understand. Do not send me away.

HELEN. Robert, I wish you to take a holiday.

ROBERT (*hoarsely*). Do not send me away. (*In a hollow voice*) You do not know what you are doing. I may never return.

HELEN (*quite unmoved*). I should not like you to cut your holiday short, dear.

ROBERT. Helen !

HELEN. If at the end of a week you wish to come back, let me know. I should, of course, like to be at home. If after a few days you feel like a month of it, you must write and tell me.

ROBERT. But what will *you* do ?

HELEN. There are many things to do. There is the store cupboard.

ROBERT (*to the chandelier*). The store cupboard !

HELEN. Pickles, my dear. Maggie tells me we are getting very low. You know you like them home-made. Of course, if you think of staying away for good, I won't make such a large quantity.

ROBERT. Helen, this is not a jest. I am in deadly earnest. I tell you, if I leave this house to-night, I may never return.

MARTIN (*with great enjoyment*). Then, that's decided, Mrs. Wilde ?

HELEN. Yes, Mr. Durrant.

ROBERT (*wildly*). Helen ! Try to realize that you are sending me away for ever.

HELEN (*mournfully*). Robert, you must obey the call of your nature.

ROBERT. Can you live your life alone? Think that these walls may never again be my home and yours—our home. (*He chokes.*)

(HELEN remains placid as ever, and ROBERT loses his temper.)

ROBERT (*with heat*). Martin, I will meet you to-morrow at Tilbury.

HELEN (*sharply*). You certainly will not, Robert.

ROBERT (*derisively*). Ah, you come to your senses now! It is too late.

(HELEN puts down her stitching, and rises sphinx-like and rings the bell.)

ROBERT (*uneasily*). What are you going to do?

HELEN. I am sending for your boots, Robert.

ROBERT (*more uneasily*). My boots?

(HELEN crosses to the window, which she opens a little. The wind is heard howling outside.)

HELEN. Do you hear that, Robert? The wind calling.

ROBERT (*still more uneasy*). You don't mean——

HELEN. Over the hills, Robert. Over the hills to Elstree.

MARTIN (*delightedly*). Twelve miles, Robert, through the wind, and the rain, and the falling leaves—eh? How wet we shall get—how gloriously wet!

Enter MAGGIE.

HELEN. Please bring the master's thickest pair of boots, Maggie. The master has to go out.

MAGGIE. Yes, m'm.

[*Exit* MAGGIE.]

ROBERT (*thoroughly alarmed*). But this is impossible. I've got to pack all my things.

HELEN. I will send your things down to the boat by messenger.

ROBERT. It is unnecessary.

HELEN (*very, very solemn*). Robert, I decided that when the call came to you, as it has come to-night, I would not stand in your way. I know what you are feeling to-night—how the comfort and warmth of this room tortures your soul. Another night beneath this roof would stifle you. Your heart is beating for the open road. You shall go now, Robert—in the rain that you love. Over the hills.

MARTIN (*unable to restrain himself*). Ha! ha! ha!

HELEN (*severely*). What is the matter with you, Mr. Durrant?

MARTIN (*solemnly*). I am laughing for pure joy of the road, Mrs. Wilde. You have given me back my friend. The trust is sacred.

Enter MAGGIE *with the boots. Amid a dead silence she places them by the fender. They are the centre of interest for all four.*

HELEN. Bring Mr. Durrant's overcoat, please, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Yes, m'm.

[*Exit* MAGGIE.]

HELEN (*indicating boots*). Now, Robert.

ROBERT (*with sombre intensity*). I warn you, Helen, once I put on those boots, no power on earth will be able to restore the happiness of this home.

MARTIN (*lifting the boots*). A fine stout pair of boots, Robert. A credit to the cobbler that made them.

HELEN. Chiropodist, Mr. Durrant.

MARTIN. Eh?

HELEN. Chiropodist, not cobbler. Robert suffers with his feet.

ROBERT (*outraged*). Give me those boots, Martin. (*Pulling them violently on*) My conscience is clear.

(*HE laces the boots in silence. The wind is heard howling outside. He rises, looks blackly at HELEN, and leaves the room for his coat. HELEN stitches on with a happy smile. MARTIN looks ever more delighted.*)

Enter MAGGIE with MARTIN's coat, which she helps him to put on.

ROBERT (*reappearing with his coat on*). Now then, Martin.

MARTIN. Ready.

HELEN. Robert, you're not going out like that.

(*SHE rises indignantly.*)

ROBERT. Eh?

HELEN. You haven't got your comforter!

ROBERT (*laughing harshly*). Those days are done with, Helen! Dead. No more comforters. This is good-bye. Martin!

HELEN (*kissing him like a mother*). Good-bye, dear.

MARTIN. Good-bye, Mrs. Wilde.

[ROBERT *leaves the room.*

HELEN. Good-bye, Mr. Durrant.

ROBERT (*calling from the hall*). Martin!

MARTIN (*at the door, significantly*). Don't wait up too long.

HELEN (*composedly*). I shall wait up long enough, Mr. Durrant.

(HE *goes out. MAGGIE follows to see them off.*

Shortly after the door bangs. HELEN goes to the window and listens to the rain.

SHE closes it, smiling a little grimly. SHE comes forward and rings the bell for MAGGIE, then settles down to her stitching by the fire. The clock strikes nine.)

MAGGIE *enters.*

HELEN. Maggie, you needn't wait up for me to-night.

MAGGIE. Yes, m'm.

HELEN. Please make up the kitchen fire before you go to bed. The master has gone out for a walk, and will probably want a hot bath when he gets back.

MAGGIE. Yes, m'm.

HELEN. You might put a tin of Colman's mustard in the bathroom—a large tin.

MAGGIE. Yes, m'm.

HELEN. And bring the whisky in here, please, with the small kettle.

MAGGIE. Yes, m'm.

(MAGGIE goes out. HELEN continues to stitch peacefully, with an occasional smile flickering over her face.)

The CURTAIN descends to mark the lapse of several hours.

The CURTAIN on rising discovers HELEN sitting in her chair by the fire. The kettle is on the hob; the whisky is beside the work-basket. ROBERT's slippers are in the fender. The clock strikes twelve. There is a tapping at the window. HELEN puts away her work, and goes to see if it is really Robert. Finding it is, she admits him through the window. He staggers stiffly in, streaming with water and groaning with aches and pains. SHE removes his coat, sits him in his chair, and begins to undo his boots.)

ROBERT. I can do that, Helen.

(SHE withdraws to watch ROBERT unlace his boots with stiff fingers. HE gets them off, puts on his slippers, stretches his feet to the fire, and leans back, lost to the world with fatigue. HELEN mixes some hot whisky.)

HELEN. Here! Drink this.

ROBERT. Eh?

HELEN. Drink this.

(*He drinks, recovers some of his brains, and looks at her, glass in hand.*)

ROBERT. Hot whisky! Slippers! (*Tears in his voice*) Don't say you expected me.

HELEN (*soothingly*). I thought it possible you might come back.

(*Robert drinks some more whisky, and feels it doing him good. He recovers enough to say judiciously :*)

ROBERT. I'm not sure whether I like it or whether I don't like it. I'm glad of the whisky. But to be expected! (*Plumping down the glass*) How dare you expect me?

HELEN (*evasively*). It's *such* a dreadful night—over the hills.

ROBERT (*with a fearful cry*). The hills! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Never mention them to me again.

HELEN. Tell me about it. (*Gives him some more whisky.*)

ROBERT. Horrible! (*Drinks.*) Soaked to the skin in five minutes. Every mile like ten. With a head wind howling past like a fury. (*Drinks.*) Now and then I heard noises from Martin. Martin was *singing*. Singing. (*Drinks.*) I had pains in my back, in my legs—all over. At last I stuck—told Martin I wouldn't budge on any farther.

HELEN. What did he say?

ROBERT. He stood in the road, dripping wet ; and he *laughed*. I left him. (*Drinks.*) I left him in the awful rain trying to light his pipe. Helen, take me to bed.

HELEN. You must get between the blankets, dear. There's a hot bath ready, and be sure to put in all the mustard.

ROBERT (*hysterical with fatigue, returning warmth, and the whisky*). Ha ! ha ! ha ! Martin ! Ha ! ha ! St-still—out—there. Over the h-h-h-h-ills.

(HELEN *smiles sweetly at ROBERT, but the smile is enigmatic. She opens the door into the hall and turns out the light in the room. SHE and ROBERT now stand in a glow from the passage.*)

ROBERT (*pulling himself together*). Eh ! Funny, isn't it ? Martin out there. Even *you* can see the humour of that.

HELEN (*leading him off*). Yes, dear.

CURTAIN.

A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF MODERN PLAYS

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